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PROGRAM Special Report

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SUBJECT Senate Hearings on Terrorism

NEWSWOMAN: Members of the Senate are looking for some answers to the problem of terrorism.

Louise Schiavone has this special report.

LOUISE SCHIAVONE: Terrorism. The experts say they can define it.

RAY CLINE: I believe that the best working definition of terrorism is the deliberate employment of violence or the threat of the use of violence to commit acts in violation of law for the purpose of creating overwhelming fear in a target population larger than the number of victims attacked or threatened.

SCHIAVONE: But even former CIA Deputy Director Ray Cline says that as a form of warfare, it's unique and very difficult to fight.

CLINE: Terrorism is a bit of street theater. It's a form of a dramatic presentation of ideas, and the target is the American public. And that's why television is such a beautiful instrument for them. And if our television reacts innocently and descriptively, they give the terrorists a magnificent chance to sell their message.

SCHIAVONE: Two Senate committees undertook a review of the broad question of terrorism and what the U.S. can and should do to respond to it. Senator Thomas Eagleton expressed the exasperation of many with this comment:

SENATOR THOMAS EAGLETON: We may be in war. Maybe we

ought to declare it and go full force at it.

SCHIAVONE: Eagleton is a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. He and many of his colleagues were distressed by news reports of a CIA-backed counter-terrorist scheme gone awry.

According to the Washington Post, a counter-terrorist team backed briefly by the CIA set off a car bomb in Beirut earlier this year. At the time of the incident, said The Post, the CIA was not involved. The bomb took 80 lives, but not the life of the terrorist leader at whom the attack was directed.

With Defense Department terrorism expert Fred Ikle before a joint Senate panel, Eagleton asked this fundamental question:

SENATOR EAGLETON: When we're trying to rub out a guy, is it never Administration policy to risk the taking of innocent lives when we're using proxy agents to rub out an obnoxious terrorist that we want to get?

UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE FRED IKLE: Well, first of all, it's not Administration policy to rub out people.

SCHIAVONE: Eagleton said that the Administration had sent out conflicting signals on the subject of terrorism. Secretary of State Shultz, he said, favored preemptive strikes or retaliation, while Vice President Bush disagreed.